

# Starting With Students

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## Using Formative Assessment to Identify and Respond to the Needs of Learners

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**During our fall staff development sessions participants will:**

- Develop a common understanding of assessment types and purposes
- Understand how to define meaningful and measurable learning targets for students
- Align defined learning targets with effective assessment methods
- Use varied evidence to define and prioritize the needs of English Language Arts learners in Lockport City Schools
- Develop strategies for teaching and formatively assessing around these skills, as needed

**Throughout the year, participants will:**

- Capture, organize, and respond to evidence collected through classroom formative assessment practices at two points during this school year

**When meeting with Angela on-site, participants will:**

- Share their findings and the ways in which they responded in order to provide more specific information about the needs of students and which instructional practices serve them best

## **Warming Up:**

Use the sticky notes provided to brainstorm and share all of the ways that you currently assess English Language Arts students. Add them to our display as you finish.

### **Think and Ink:**

Please share your thoughts about the following questions in the space provided below.

**1. Which types of assessment do you give most often? Why?**

**2. What types of assessment are most valuable to you? Which are least? Explain.**

**3. In your opinion, are your students assessed too often or too little? Please explain below. Describe how your assessment practices could be improved.**

# Text-Based Study

Please select ONE of the texts provided and collaborate with those reading the same piece to engage in the protocol below.

## A Protocol for Interpreting and Questioning Text

### Purpose:

This process provides structure to group analysis of different texts, providing time and space for deep analysis, varied interpretation, and thoughtful questioning.

### Process:

1. Assign a facilitator, a recorder, and a timer. Each group member must also have a copy of their chosen text as well as materials to write with.
2. The facilitator defines the topic of the text and previews EACH of the following steps that all readers will follow (5 minutes):
  - **Step 1: Consideration of the Focus Question (1 minute):**  
The facilitator shares this question with the group prior to reading and ensures that all are clear about how to proceed: *What important points about assessment are raised by this piece?*
  - **Step 2: Silent Reading and Reaction to the Text (15 minutes):**  
*With the focus question in mind, individuals read the text, making note of connections, questions, and relevant ideas that arise. Indicators for literacy are identified. There may be no discussion at this time.*
  - **Step 3: Round Robin (10 minutes):**  
*Each participant shares one to three elements that he or she took note of. The recorder records each observation on a chart. No interpretation is allowed at this time.*
  - **Step 4: Clarifying (3 minutes):**  
*The recorder asks the group if any observation needs clarification or if the text needs to be revisited to provide for fact-checking.*
  - **Step 5: Group Interpretation (10 minutes):**  
*The facilitator guides the group in the identification of one to three items on the chart that would be interesting to discuss further. Each participant is then encouraged to share possible interpretations of those items. No one may challenge these interpretations just yet.*
  - **Step 6: Individual Interpretation and Theorizing (5 minutes):**  
*The facilitator asks participants to select one idea from the text to write about, based upon a particular perspective or theory that each has. This is where individual interpretation and challenge can occur.*
  - **Step 7: Think/Pair/Question (10 minutes):**  
*Participants share their writing, and challenge each other appropriately.*
  - **Step 8: Closure (5 minutes):**  
*The group reconvenes, and each participant shares one thing that they learned from the whole text as a result of using this process.*

## Assessment Types and Purposes

Purpose	Type	Examples
<p>To learn more about what students know and are able to do prior to instruction in order to compact or prioritize curricula.</p> <p>To engage students in content and processes which attend to their unique needs. To challenge them in the creation of products strategically aligned to their skills and passions.</p>	<p>Low-Stakes Formative Assessment: Diagnostic or Pre-Test</p>	<p>Mr. Marten strategically assigns his fourth grade students to reading centers based upon their performance on a pre-test.</p> <p>Mrs. Franz asks students to complete a writing sample in September each year. She analyzes which traits of writing her students use most skillfully and determines how she might leverage these strengths to improve their use of other traits.</p>
<p>To determine how students are progressing in their efforts to achieve learning goals, in order to provide feedback, re-direct, and adjust instruction.</p>	<p>Low-Stakes Formative Assessment: Guided Practice</p>	<p>As students work in their reading centers, Mr. Marten uses a checklist to record which students are able to make accurate inferences about different types of text, using evidence. He also captures his reflections about why students are successful or why they struggle. He uses this information to adjust his instruction as well as the center activities.</p> <p>Mrs. Franz conferences with writers as they draft. She asks them to discuss the problems they are confronting as they work, as well as where they feel most successful. She documents their responses on a log. She then provides specific strategies, enabling them to overcome their challenges and improve their work before submitting a final copy.</p>
<p>To assess mastery of content and skills.</p>	<p>Higher Stakes Summative Assessment: Selected or Constructed Response Tests Performances (Writing, Drama) Presentations</p>	<p>Once all students have successfully completed their learning centers, Mr. Marten asks each to infer the theme of the novel they are reading for a literature circles experience, using evidence from the text. They share their knowledge through a constructed response.</p> <p>After students have conferred with Mrs. Franz, she teaches them how to ask for and receive feedback from one another. Students complete multiple drafts of their writing, improving their work after each opportunity for feedback. Polished final drafts are submitted and used as a summative assessment of what students know and are able to do.</p>

# Using Varied Measures of Evidence to Prioritize Learning Targets

## I. **Connecting: Whole Group**

The following questions prompt conversation that sets the stage for the work that will follow. Reflect on these questions quietly, in pairs, and then as a community.

What do we recall about student performance from our previous work with students and with each other?

What assumptions or predictions do we bring with us?

What are some of the questions we have?

What do we wonder?

What are some of the possibilities that this particular experience might bring to us?

## II. **Exploring Evidence: Grade Level Groups**

Maintaining a position of *conscious curiosity* and *purposeful uncertainty* is essential to this work. For this reason, we do not aim to draw conclusions here. Avoiding use of the word “because” is a helpful reminder.

As you explore the data presented, what important points are revealed?

What patterns or trends do you notice?

What seems to be unexpected or surprising?

What hasn't been captured by these data?

What hasn't been explored?

What could we study further?

What other measures could we bring into this conversation?

## III. **Organizing Findings: Grade Level Groups/Whole Group**

Considering the following questions while examining tasks with depth helps us create potential explanations that are meaningful. Use the deconstruction template to analyze assessment items, and then discuss the following questions.

What inferences might we draw?

What explanations can we provide?

What additional evidence might further inform the meaning we are making?

Which measures might provide that evidence?

## IV. **Defining Intervention Approaches: Grade Level Groups/Whole Group**

Define FOUR areas where we can impact positive change for learners next year in your grade level group.

## Assessment Deconstruction Template

Performance Indicator or Skill Explored:

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Year of Assessment/Items:

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Item	Content of Passage	Type of Question MC/Short Answer/CR	Level of Bloom's: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Creation	What were ALL of the literacy skills necessary for success?	Other observations and curiosities about this item:

**Potential Literacy Skills:**

**Deep Structure/Comprehension Skills:** Connect, Question, Infer, Synthesize, Determine Importance, Visualize, Features of Genre/Text

**Surface Structure Reading Skills:** Grapho-Phonics, Lexical System Functioning, Syntactic Systems: Letter/Sound Recognition, Sight Word Understandings, Text Structure and Language Conventions

**Writing Skills:** Ideas, Voice, Organization, Conventions, Sentence Fluency, Word Choice, Use of the Writer's Process, Execution of Genre

**Listening Skills**

**Please Add Your Expertise Here:**

# DESIGNING AN INTERVENTION

Phase of Instruction	Strategies and Tools
Define skill to be taught	<b>Input/Direct Instruction</b>
Model through use of think aloud	<b>Mentor Texts</b> Your own writing/thinking/note-making Their writing/thinking/note-making
Provide guided practice and check for understanding/student progress  Provide Feedback  *Gather data about student performance*	<b>Formative Assessment</b> Annotations: <i>Student Work</i> <i>Rubrics</i> <i>Checklists</i> <i>Conference Records</i> <i>Portfolios</i> <i>Video/Audio/Transcripts</i>  Anecdotal Records  Reflective Pieces
Adjust instruction in response to identified needs.	
Provide opportunities for independent practice. Adjust instruction in response to identified needs and provide opportunities to rethink/revise/improve  Provide Feedback  *Gather data about student performance*	<b>Formative Assessment</b> Annotations: <i>Student Work</i> <i>Rubrics</i> <i>Checklists</i> <i>Conference Records</i> <i>Portfolios</i> <i>Video/Audio/Transcripts</i>  Anecdotal Records  Reflective Pieces
Assess mastery	<b>Summative Assessment</b>

## A Case Study: Mr. Marten

Mr. Marten is a fourth grade teacher. This year, he is eager to help his students establish accurate inferences about the novels that they read. He is concerned by the fact that when he asks students to make inferences in a large group setting, they are often unable to ground their inferences in evidence from the text. When he reviewed his state assessment data, his hunches were confirmed: students in his school underperformed when asked to infer every year, particularly when they read narrative text. He has established learning centers that will provide practice to students around this skill while allowing him to learn more about their abilities to infer.

Center	Activity	Formative Assessment and Response
Inferring Word Meaning	As students read texts above their instructional level, they will highlight words they do not know the meaning of. They will use a variety of strategies provided within the center to infer the meaning of these unknown words and list the strategies and inferred meaning created in a classroom log.	Mr. Marten reviews <u>the log</u> and determines that students often skip words they don't know the meaning of and rely on context clues to infer meaning. None of them use word parts to construct meaning. He decides that he will provide more instruction around this in the next round of center work.
Making Inferences About Characters	Students will use a triple-entry journal to capture :  Quotes from the novel they are studying in class relevant to character motivation.  Inferences about what the selected quotes imply about the character.  Reflections about how their inferences help them understand more about the text as a whole.	Mr. Marten reviews <u>the triple entry journals</u> and determines that most students are able to select accurate quotes, but that their inferences are constructed around shallow aspects of the text/character. He will provide feedback to students on <u>sticky notes attached to the journals</u> . He will also provide strategies to the class through a mini-lesson, and he will re-assess this skill afterward. Later, these notes will be detached and shared with other department members to inform conversations about this prioritized learning target.
Making Inferences About Story Events	Students will plot out the events that have taken place in the novel they have studied using chart paper. They will add sticky notes to the plot line which reveal their inferences about:  Why these events occurred What might happen next What could have happened instead	Having just completed instruction around author's purpose the previous week, Mr. Marten was eager to know if students will transfer their understandings about it during independent practice. He observed this group in action and documented whether or not the students spoke to author's purpose during their discussion using an <u>annotated record</u> . Most were able to, but several did not. He invited these students to join him for added help around this the next day during SSR.
Inferring Theme	Students will write the draft of a thesis statement for an essay. They will state the theme of the novel that they have studied and support it with three different details from the text that may be elaborated on within the essay (to be drafted later).	Mr. Marten used the student work samples to determine who was able to articulate a meaningful theme using detail from the text. He captured his findings on a <u>checklist</u> . Then, he copied the effective examples onto a separate document, removed names, and added them to the center so that struggling students could refer to them as mentor texts while crafting their own.
Connecting to the Text	Students will use any visual medium of their choice (digital camera, clip art, magazine photos, illustration) to demonstrate how the following connections:  Connections between what they are reading and their personal experiences.  Connections between what they are reading and the things that they have learned from other texts and visual media.  Connections between what they are reading and world issues and events.	Mr. Marten provided students reflective prompts relevant to their thinking, process, and the products created. He asked them to use a Flip Video camera to <u>record their responses</u> . These videos were added to their final products. <u>He noted these trends upon review:</u>  Students were able to make text-to-self connections best. Half were unable to make text-to-world connections. Only 2 students considered audience as they worked.  He refined the center, providing resources that would better enable text-to-world connections and requiring pre-planning that asked them to consider audience.

## A Case Study: Mrs. Franz

Mrs. Franz is an eleventh grade English Language Arts teacher. Her largest priority is to help her students become powerful writers. At the start of the year, she gave her students a writing assignment before she taught them anything. She used a rubric to assess their development of each of the following elements of writer's craft and used a checklist capture the findings.

Student	Idea Development	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Other Notes
Jeremiah	✓	✓					Texting Language
Abdul	✓						
Mikayla		✓			✓		Texting Language
Katherine	✓	✓				✓	
Jordan	✓			✓	✓		Texting Language
Casey	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Susan	✓	✓				✓	
Ricky	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Michael	✓	✓					
Lauren	✓			✓	✓		
Sumayyah	✓			✓	✓		
Irene	✓	✓				✓	
Marie	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	Texting Language
Erie	✓						Severe spelling errors
Lindsay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
David							Texting Language
Marc	✓					✓	

## Formative Assessment Opportunity 2

Mrs. Franz returns these writing pieces to her students. She celebrates their use of engaging ideas, word choice, and sentence fluency. She then leads the group through a mini-lesson on writer's voice, demonstrating how thoughtful use of word choice and sentence fluency enables writers to establish voice. Students are asked to use the following strategies to improve voice in the returned drafts:

- Use words that reveal the age of the speaker, the location of the speaker, the time period and setting of the story, or how the speaker feels (word choice).
- Lengthen or shorten your sentences to reveal how the character is feeling or how old the character is (sentence fluency).

As students work, she moves from one to the next, prompting them to define these things about their character further and assessing which strategies are serving them best. She adds their new strengths to the chart.

Student	Idea Development	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Other Notes
Jeremiah	✓	✓		+			Texting Language
Abdul	✓			+			
Mikayla		✓		+	✓		Texting Language
Katherine	✓	✓		+		✓	
Jordan	✓			✓	✓		Texting Language
Casey	✓	✓		+	✓	✓	
Susan	✓	✓			+	✓	
Ricky	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Michael	✓	✓			+		
Lauren	✓			✓	✓		
Sumayyah	✓			✓	✓		
Irene	✓	✓			+	✓	
Marie	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	Texting Language
Erie	✓				+		Severe spelling errors
Lindsay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
David					+		Texting Language
Marc	✓			+		✓	

### Formative Assessment Opportunity Three

Mrs. Franz notices that approximately half of her students applied a word choice strategy in establishing voice. Others applied a sentence fluency strategy. The next day, she paired these students together and asked them to exchange papers. Writers used the work of their peers as mentor text, and peers provided feedback to one another about how their partners could make use of the strategy that they had expertise in. Writers were asked to revise their work for homework. During class the next day, students engaged in silent reading while Mrs. Franz conferred with students. She asked them to demonstrate how they made use of the previous day's learning and recorded it on her chart. She asks those who haven't mastered voice to stay after for extra help.

Student	Idea Development	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Other Notes
Jeremiah	✓	✓	+	+	+		Texting Language
Abdul	✓		+	+	+		
Mikayla		✓	+	+	✓		Texting Language
Katherine	✓	✓	+	+	+	✓	
Jordan	✓		+	✓	✓		Texting Language
Casey	✓	✓	+	+	✓	✓	
Susan	✓	✓			+	✓	
Ricky	✓	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	
Michael	✓	✓	+	+	+		
Lauren	✓		+	✓	✓		
Sumayyah	✓		+	✓	✓		
Irene	✓	✓	+	+	+	✓	
Marie	✓	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	Texting Language
Erie	✓		+	+	+		Severe spelling errors
Lindsay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
David			+	+	+		Texting Language
Marc	✓			+		✓	

### Formative Assessment Opportunity Four

Mrs. Franz asks her students to submit a polished rough draft. She takes them home, reads them, and uses a rubric to provide feedback to writers about their strengths as well as strategies that might address each writer's struggles. She then takes note of each writer's most prevalent errors in spelling, punctuation, and mechanics on her checklist and adds this information to the writer's rubric. She edits each student's paper and returns them. Students are required to use the feedback provided to make final changes to their drafts. They are also required to correct their errors in conventions after these rules are reviewed in class and practice is provided. Students are told that on subsequent final drafts, papers will not be accepted until these errors have been repaired independently.

Student	Idea Development	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Other Notes
Jeremiah	✓	✓	+	+	+	RO	Texting Language
Abdul	✓		+	+	+	RO/Par.	
Mikayla		✓	+	+	✓	Frag	Texting Language
Katherine	✓	✓	+	+	+	✓	
Jordan	✓		+	✓	✓	Spelling RO/Par	Texting Language
Casey	✓	✓	+	+	✓	✓	
Susan	✓	✓			+	✓	
Ricky	✓	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	
Michael	✓	✓	+	+	+	Frag/Par	
Lauren	✓		+	✓	✓	RO/Spell	
Sumayyah	✓		+	✓	✓	Par	
Irene	✓	✓	+	+	+	✓	
Marie	✓	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	Texting Language
Erie	✓		+	+	+	Spelling Par RO No punct.	Severe spelling errors
Lindsay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Frag (few)	
David	+		+	+	+	Spelling Par Frag	Texting Language
Marc	✓			+		✓	

**Formative Assessment Opportunity Five**

Mrs. Franz requires students to complete a written reflection about their growth as writers throughout this process. Each student is asked to define how they came to understand the elements of craft they were formerly struggling with and to articulate strategies they developed. Mrs. Franz uses highlights from these reflections along with her checklist to have a rich conversation with her colleagues and administrators about the writing strengths and needs of students and which practices served students best.

## Aligning Learning Targets With Assessment Types

<i>Skill Type</i>	<i>ASSESSMENT TYPES</i>			
	<i>Selected Response</i>	<i>Essay</i>	<i>Performance Task</i>	<i>Personal Communication</i>
<b>Knowledge Mastery</b>	MC, True/False Matching and Fill in the Blank can sample mastery of elements of knowledge	Essay exercises can tap understandings of relationships among elements of knowledge	Not a good choice for this target	Can ask questions, evaluate answers, and infer mastery—but time-consuming
<b>Reasoning Proficiency</b>	Can assess understanding of basic patterns of reasoning	Written descriptions of complex problem solutions can provide a window into reasoning proficiency	Can watch some students solve some problems and infer about reasoning proficiency	Can ask a student to think-aloud or ask follow-up questions to probe reasoning
<b>Skills</b>	Can assess mastery of the knowledge prerequisites to skillful performance, but can't rely on these to tap the skill itself		Can evaluate the skills as they are being performed	Strong match when skill is oral communication proficiency; also can assess mastery of knowledge prerequisite to skillful performance
<b>Ability to Create Products</b>	Can assess mastery of the knowledge prerequisites to skillful performance, but can't rely on these to assess the quality of the product itself		A strong match can assess: a. proficiency in carrying out steps in product development b. attributes of the product itself	Can probe procedural knowledge and knowledge of attributes of quality products—but not product quality
<b>Dispositions</b>	Selected response questionnaire items can tap student feelings	Open-ended questionnaire items can probe dispositions	Can infer dispositions from behavior and products	Can talk with students about their feelings

# PLANNING AN INTERVENTION

Use the template below to plan an intervention aligned to the learning target we've prioritized for this study.

Phase of Instruction	Strategies and Tools
Define skill to be taught	
Model through use of think aloud	
Provide guided practice and check for understanding/student progress  Provide Feedback  *Gather data about student performance*	
Adjust instruction in response to identified needs.	
Provide opportunities for independent practice. Adjust instruction in response to identified needs and provide opportunities to rethink/revise/improve  Provide Feedback  *Gather data about student performance*	
Assess mastery	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Building: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. How do you plan to teach around the identified target this fall?**

**2. How do you plan to formatively assess around the identified target this fall?**

**3. How will you document your findings?**

**4. How will you organize your documentation so that it can be shared and interpreted by others?**

**5. What further support will you need in order to accomplish this?**

## References

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